

change in the rejection's reasoning was in response to applicant's prior amendment which added statements that the first and second orifices convey fluid between the same hydraulic circuit node and both the first and second accumulators. Thus, a junction below an orifice 18A no longer qualified as the claimed hydraulic circuit node, because only one orifice 18A conveys fluid between that node and an accumulator.

Considering a node along hydraulic line 13 as the claimed circuit node, as in the final rejection, results in the Sonehara patent failing to teach the claimed leveling valve. That leveling valve has a first position in which the hydraulic circuit node is coupled to the source of pressurized fluid, a second position in which the hydraulic circuit node is coupled to the tank, and a third position in which the hydraulic circuit node is disconnected from both the source and the tank.

However, all the nodes along hydraulic line 13 in the reference are always coupled to the tank 2 through the filter 27. In addition, none of those nodes is ever connected to a source of pressurized fluid, which based on the claim language must be different than the cylinders 23 and the accumulators 18 in the suspension system. Valves 16 in the patent, which allegedly correspond to the claimed leveling valve, merely connect a node on hydraulic line 13 to the chambers of one of the suspension cylinders 23. Therefore, the valve 16 in Sonehara does not correspond to the claimed leveling valve as it does not have a third position in which the node along hydraulic line 13 is disconnected from the tank. Nor is there a first position in which the valve 16 couples the hydraulic circuit node along hydraulic line 13 to the source of pressurized fluid.

Alternatively, if a point along the other hydraulic line 7 in Sonehara was considered to be the hydraulic circuit node, that too would negate the finding of the claimed leveling

valve in the reference. Note that line 7 is always connected to the output of the pump 4 which is a source of pressurized fluid and in none of the positions of the valves 16 is line 7 connected to tank. Furthermore, in this alternative, there still is not a third position of a valve in which the hydraulic circuit node along line 7 is disconnected from both the source of pressurized fluid and the tank.

As a consequence, Sonehara does not teach the structure of the suspension system recited in claim 1 and thus does not anticipate that claim under 35 U.S.C. §102.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Sonehara in view of Rogala.

At the outset, it is noted that Rogala does not teach a leveling valve having three positions, much less a leveling valve connected as stated in independent claim 1. Therefore, even when the teachings of Rogala are combined with those of Sonehara, there is no suggestion of the suspension system as recited in the independent claim from which claims 2-10 depend. For that reason alone, those dependent claims are patentable.

Furthermore, with respect to claims 6 and 7, nothing in the combined teachings of the references suggests a need to provide an additional proportional control valve as in Rogala between the accumulator and the respective cylinder in Sonehara. Note that when it is desired to isolate the associated cylinder from the accumulator in Sonehara, the flow control valve 16 is placed there between, as shown for actuators 19FC, 19RR, and 19RC. Therefore, the references do not suggest a combination of elements that renders claim 6 and 7 obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Independent claims 11 and 17 each recite a three-position leveling valve which is connected in a similar manner to the valve in claim 1. This leveling valve and its connection to other components is not suggested by the references for the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1. As a consequence, even when the teachings of Sonehara and Rogala are combined, nothing remotely suggests the load leveling valve and the other components connected and providing the functionality as stated in claims 11 and 17.

In addition, for the reasons discussed above regarding claims 6 and 7, the combined teachings of those patents do not suggest to one of ordinary skill in the art why the first and second proportional control valves specified in claim 11 would be added to the Sonehara circuit.


As a result, claims 11-20 are not rendered obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Conclusion

In view of these distinctions between the subject matter of the present claims and teachings of the cited patents, reconsideration and allowance of the present application are requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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